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SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS: QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General on the review of the capacity, experience and coordination arrangements in the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 6	2
II.	RECOMMENDATIONS	7 - 34	3
	A. Early warning	7 - 9	3
	B. Prevention	10 - 11	3
	C. Preparedness and stand-by capacity	12 - 27	3
	D. Consolidated appeals	28 - 29	6
	E. Strengthened coordination and leadership	30 - 34	6
Annex.	Information on and analysis of the mandates, capacities and activities of organizations of the United Nations system involved in humanitarian assistance		9

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The response of the international community to disasters, natural or man-made, has rightly become a major international concern. In recent years, disasters have occurred more frequently, and the world has witnessed massive spectacles of devastation and death. The effects are aggravated by economic factors that have been detrimental for many developing countries. There has been a manifold increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons. Present conditions do not warrant any optimistic expectations regarding the occurrence, impact and complexity of humanitarian emergencies in the foreseeable future.

2. As the United Nations and its specialized agencies stand at the intersecting point of the political, developmental, environmental and humanitarian aspects of this complex question, the Organization has increasingly been called upon to play the crucial role of framing the international response. The issue that arises is how the response can be made more coherent, timely, effective, commensurate with need and assured of cohesive leadership. Closely related is the reduction and eventual elimination of the root causes of humanitarian emergencies.

3. While impressive results have been obtained by the United Nations in cases like the Bangladesh operation in the 1970s and the Office of Emergency Operations for Africa, the experience has not been uniform. Important lessons have however been learned; these need to be carefully borne in mind in planning the strategies and mechanisms required for the future.

4. To ensure that the international effort yields the most positive results, two conditions seem to be absolutely essential. First, the resources provided must be sufficient and readily available. Second, coordination within the United Nations system and with Member States, both recipients and donors, as well as with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, must be improved.

5. A number of programmes and agencies, as well as departments of the United Nations are involved in the prevention, mitigation and provision of assistance in emergency situations. This multiplicity of mandates, capacities and governing bodies has led to several requests to the Secretary-General for reports on one or another issue, sometimes with specific provisions for the strengthening of one or another of the programmes and departments involved. However, ad hoc measures do not add up to a coherent plan. The recommendations that follow have therefore sought to be comprehensive in scope and to deal with all aspects of the handling of emergency situations, including early warning, prevention, preparedness and stand-by capacity, consolidated appeals and strengthened coordination and leadership.

6. In addition, information on and analysis of the mandates, capacities and activities of organizations of the system involved in humanitarian assistance are contained in an annex to the report.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Early warning

7. Early-warning systems allow the concerned entities of the United Nations system as well as the affected countries to take appropriate prevention and preparedness measures. Several United Nations agencies already operate early-warning systems in their areas of competence or maintain databases that can provide useful information for early warning. These systems have proved to be particularly helpful in dealing with sudden natural disasters and with drought and crop failures. Regular pooling and analysis of all available information should be carried out on a systematic basis. It is also necessary to strengthen the institutional capacity in disaster-prone countries to receive and effectively use this information and disseminate it to the local levels.

8. Since refugee flows and other population displacements result from widely different causes, effective early warning requires integrating information, including that on political events and their impact, and ensuring that it can be utilized in the decision-making process.

9. More systematic arrangements should be put in place by the United Nations to draw upon the early-warning capacities of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

B. Prevention

10. There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of disaster-prone countries in the area of disaster management on the basis of existing preparedness and prevention strategies.

11. At the country level, the United Nations system should step up its efforts to help Governments to develop integrated disaster mitigation programmes so that they can establish the precise nature of hazards and risks. In this regard, the measures envisaged in the programme for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, including the early establishment of national disaster management offices in disaster-prone countries, need to be implemented. Furthermore, the disaster management training programme recently initiated by the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should be strengthened so as to enable the field staff to be fully prepared for coping with disasters and emergencies.

C. Preparedness and stand-by capacity

12. The United Nations system must be in a position to make advance arrangements, on the basis of both its existing and stand-by capacities, to assist emergency-prone and/or affected countries. To that end, a number of operational organizations have already strengthened their emergency capacity.

Others are in the process of doing so with the active involvement of their respective governing bodies. These efforts should be fully supported.

13. The existing capacity of the United Nations system should be augmented by necessary stand-by arrangements that could be activated quickly. This would involve the measures described in the following paragraphs.

1. Central emergency revolving fund

14. A United Nations central emergency revolving fund should be established under the authority of the Secretary-General, through a one-time assessment on Member States, for use in the initial phase of complex emergency operations. Resources should be advanced to the operational organizations of the system on the understanding that they would reimburse the fund in the first instance from the voluntary contributions received in response to consolidated appeals.

15. The revolving fund should be established on a trial basis at $50 million and its operation should be reviewed after two years.

16. The fund would be primarily a cash-flow mechanism to enable the organizations of the system to respond effectively in the initial phases of an emergency. It should therefore not be seen as a substitute for voluntary contributions by the donor community in relation to each emergency - contributions that can best be mobilized by the operational organizations of the United Nations system.

17. The fund would in no way be a substitute for the provision of food and the transport costs of food for complex emergencies, which would continue to be drawn from the International Emergency Food Reserve and/or World Food Programme (WFP) resources.

18. The fund would be managed by the Secretary-General, drawing on the advice of the operational organizations of the system through a standing inter-agency committee, which would address, in addition to inter-agency cooperation for each complex emergency, questions relating to the utilization, allocation and reimbursement of the fund.

2. Additional measures for rapid response

(a) Pre-positioning of stockpiles of relief supplies and logistical support

19. The stand-by capacity with regard to food stockpiles would not involve actual food reserves, but would require donor countries to commit themselves to provide broader access for the United Nations through WFP to their national food reserves or cash to purchase food, at short notice, preferably within a guaranteed period of calling such stocks forward.

20. Efficient and cost-effective logistics arrangements are recognized as an essential element of successful emergency response. With respect to food logistics and related expertise, in addition to its own capacity, WFP should be given access, when necessary, to donor facilities and equipment. Such logistics, expertise and capacity would be extended to other agencies, as required, for the delivery of non-food items to crisis areas.

21. For non-food aid items, existing rapid supply centres, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supply operation at Copenhagen (UNIPAC), which provides the bulk of non-food emergency relief supplies for the United Nations system, and the specialized United Nations stockpile at Pisa managed by UNDRO, should continue to standardize their inventories and expand their access to suppliers so as to achieve cost reductions and savings on overheads and timely turnover, and to enable the stockpiles to be part of a rapid procurement and shipping system.

22. Communications with countries and areas affected by emergencies play a crucial role in ensuring swift and effective responses to emergencies. Several organizations of the United Nations system have taken steps to develop capacities in this field, making full use of modern technology. To the extent possible these facilities should be integrated at the country level. On the global level, UNDRO is preparing an international convention on free access of communications equipment to disaster sites. Protocols are already in place with some Governments for utilization of the necessary equipment and personnel for such activities, but the number of such countries providing assistance to the United Nations in this field needs to be increased.

(b) Teams of technical specialists for emergencies

23. The emergency operations groups at the country level should be supplemented by rapid deployment of stand-by teams of technical specialists, including the civilian disaster relief corps of Governments, whenever required and deemed appropriate.

(c) Standing arrangements with Member States for access to their emergency relief capacities

24. Arrangements should be made with Governments to enable the United Nations to have expeditious access, when necessary, to their emergency relief capacities, including emergency stockpiles and staff, as well as logistic support. Such arrangements should include agreements on administrative and financial procedures for the rapid deployment of these capacities.

(d) Databases on existing and stand-by capacities inside and outside the United Nations system

25. In order to ensure effective management of the United Nations system response to emergencies, the operational organizations should maintain databases and inventories of specialized personnel based on rigorous selection criteria, as well as supplies, equipment and services available for immediate

relief activities. These databases should be developed to include relevant information particularly on sources of supplies, related time for delivery, as well as location. UNDRO efforts to strengthen its information management system aimed at providing an overview of the existing databases on disaster management, as well as of other available information on disaster management resources, should be supported.

(e) Special emergency rules and procedures for procurement and recruitment

26. While some organizations already have in place special rules and procedures, arrangements should be made to ensure that all the organizations concerned are able to procure emergency supplies and equipment, as well as to recruit emergency staff quickly. To that end, special emergency rules and procedures should be developed to provide them with the necessary flexibility. In addition, the security procedures of the United Nations system should be amended to permit the continuation or initiation of humanitarian relief activities even when normal activities have been suspended.

27. Governments should also develop special emergency procedures to expedite the rapid procurement and deployment of equipment and relief supplies.

D. Consolidated appeals

28. Once a major or complex emergency is declared, the organizations of the system will prepare together an initial consolidated appeal, to be issued by the Secretary-General within one week. The initial appeal will be refined within four to six weeks as more information becomes available, and will be followed by periodic situation reports. This arrangement will not preclude the normal communications that each organization has with its donors.

29. Governments should adopt the necessary measures to increase and expedite their contributions, including the possibility of setting aside, on a stand-by basis, financial resources that can be deployed quickly to the United Nations system in response to consolidated appeals of the Secretary-General.

E. Strengthened coordination and leadership

30. In large-scale and complex emergencies in particular, the leadership of the Secretary-General is critical in mobilizing the political, humanitarian and development capacities of the United Nations system for a coherent and effective response.

31. In order to exercise such leadership to maximum effect, the Secretary-General would appoint a high-level official to assist him personally to respond to emergencies, it being understood that the requisite resources would be provided (see para. 14). This high-level official would draw upon the capacity of the existing operational organizations.

32. Under the direction of the Secretary-General, the high-level official would, inter alia, have the following responsibilities:

(a) Advising the Secretary-General on all humanitarian emergency situations, including their political dimensions;

(b) Monitoring all emergencies with a view to identifying complex and large-scale emergencies that require a system-wide response after consultation with the concerned operational organizations;

(c) Coordinating and facilitating a coherent and timely response of the United Nations system to such emergencies;

(d) Organizing joint inter-agency needs assessment missions and preparing consolidated appeals to be issued by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the operational organizations concerned;

(e) Negotiating access by the operational organizations to emergency areas with the consent of concerned parties;

(f) Managing, in consultation with the operational organizations, the utilization of the central emergency revolving fund;

(g) Negotiating and assisting in the establishment of arrangements with Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to mobilize their support for the response of the United Nations system. A central registry of emergency capacities within and outside the United Nations system should be established and maintained;

(h) Providing consolidated information, including early warning, on each complex and large-scale emergency drawing on the capacities of the organizations of the system, and issuing periodic situation reports;

(i) Working closely with the operational organizations of the United Nations system as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), particularly through chairing regular consultations in the context of a standing inter-agency committee on emergencies. At the country level, the high-level official would maintain close contact and provide leadership to the resident coordinators and the disaster management teams;

(j) Serving as a central focal point with Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, and the media;

(k) Assisting in the mobilization of resources.

33. The high-level official would be assisted in New York by a small core secretariat based on a consolidation of existing offices that monitor individual complex emergencies. The core secretariat would be supplemented by staff seconded from concerned organizations of the system.

34. UNDRO capacities need to be strengthened in order to provide common technical support services for both natural disasters and complex emergencies. This applies in particular to disaster mitigation, preparation of inventories of the stand-by capacities available in the international community, warehouse of stockpiles of relief supplies required for immediate response airlifts, and operations centre, as well as the preparation and dissemination of situation reports.

ANNEX

Information on and analysis of the mandates, capacities and activities of organizations of the United Nations system involved in humanitarian assistance

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	BACKGROUND	1 - 32	10
	A. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	3 - 13	10
	B. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	14 - 18	13
	C. United Nations Children's Fund	19	14
	D. World Food Programme	20	14
	E. United Nations Development Programme	21 - 23	15
	F. Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator	24 - 26	15
	G. Specialized agencies	27 - 28	17
	H. Ad hoc coordination arrangements	29 - 32	17
II.	CAPACITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM	33 - 85	19
	A. Mitigation - prevention and preparedness, including early-warning systems	36 - 59	19
	B. Needs assessment and appeals	60 - 65	25
	C. Dissemination of information on emergencies	66 - 68	26
	D. Access to emergency areas	69 - 70	27
	E. Operating procedures	71 - 74	27
	F. Logistics	75 - 76	28
	G. International Committee of the Red Cross and International Organization for Migration	77 - 81	29
	H. Non-governmental organizations and the media	82 - 85	30

I. BACKGROUND

1. Humanitarian assistance in emergencies is primarily the responsibility of the Government of the affected country. When large-scale emergencies occur, the Government of the stricken country may have to deal with a task that is beyond its own means. In such situations the United Nations is expected, at the request of the affected countries, to mobilize and coordinate the assistance and resources of the international community to help them in their efforts.

2. The responsibilities of the various organizations involved in humanitarian assistance are set out below.

A. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

3. When established in 1951, UNHCR was formally mandated to protect refugees, facilitate durable solutions to their problems, and "engage in such additional activities ... as the General Assembly may determine ...". a/ Since then, through a series of General Assembly resolutions, the competence of the Office has embraced a broader group of persons, including returnees, stateless persons and persons in need of protection, uprooted by the prevailing situation of serious, generalized violence in their own countries.

4. Refugees are defined in the statute of the Office of the UNHCR contained in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as persons who flee their countries owing to a "well-founded fear of persecution". Persons of concern to UNHCR have been recognized in relevant General Assembly resolutions to include a broader category of refugees, sometimes referred to as victims of war or serious civil strife, as opposed to victims of persecution. This definition has found recognition in the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees of 1984. The Working Group on Solutions and Protection, which was convened by the High Commissioner at the request of the Executive Committee, has been meeting over the past year to examine the protection needs and solution requirements of a number of groups of persons associated with the search for asylum and refuge. The Working Group has, inter alia, examined the issue of the international community's role, including that of UNHCR, in assisting, protecting and resolving the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing situations of serious internal disturbance or civil war. The Working Group's report, with recommendations, will be presented to the Executive Committee at its forty-second session, in October 1991.

5. The system put in place in 1950 was established to respond to the needs of people displaced by the Second World War and its aftermath. This humanitarian structure has not yet been adapted to deal with the problems of economic and social deprivation that are the mainspring of much of the present phenomenon of mass movements. The legal definition of refugees has made it difficult at times to accommodate many of the recent situations in which men,

women and children have been forced to abandon their homes in large numbers. Many of the places in which refugees find asylum are in developing countries with inadequate infrastructure and transport networks, areas where government services to nationals - for example, primary health care and education - often fall below acceptable minimum levels. Many of the countries hosting refugees in Africa have chronic and recurring food deficits and economies in decline as a result of external debt, depressed commodity prices and the effects of conflict. This is a very different context from the one in which UNHCR was initially established.

6. Under the statute/Convention, international protection provided to refugees requires UNHCR to take all necessary action to secure the rights and welfare of refugees and to improve their situation. Such action includes measures calculated to reduce the number of refugees requiring protection as well as efforts to seek solutions to their problems. This may involve the provision of emergency assistance or similar essential assistance necessary to safeguard their fundamental rights and to promote their voluntary repatriation, rehabilitation or integration in a new community. Protection, as a result, is a continuous process that calls for action during flight, admission, the emergency phase, the periods of stabilization and the search for solutions and their implementation. It is often not possible to dissociate protection from assistance activities, the latter often being the means to provide the former. UNHCR is the only international organization with the institutional capacity and the unique responsibility for providing international protection to refugees. IOM, an intergovernmental organization, offers migration services and cooperates in the transport of persons of concern to UNHCR.

7. As regards assistance to returnees, the General Assembly has stated that UNHCR and other United Nations organizations as appropriate should have resources readily available to assist returnees in the various stages of their integration and rehabilitation in their country of origin. The General Assembly has also endorsed a protection function for UNHCR on behalf of the returnees as part of the High Commissioner's legitimate interest in the consequences of voluntary repatriation. In so doing, the General Assembly has interpreted UNHCR's original mandate of facilitating the voluntary repatriation of refugees to include the monitoring of repatriates' reintegration in their country of origin, as well as any follow-up that may be necessary in order to ensure that reintegration. Consequently, the Office should be given direct and unhindered access to repatriates and provide them with initial reintegration assistance, while other United Nations organizations are called on to provide assistance for reconstruction and development.

8. The mandate of UNHCR also requires it to address emergencies whilst simultaneously promoting durable solutions. The search for a durable solution necessarily involves political and diplomatic action consisting of a dialogue with the refugees on how they perceive their future, together with consultations with countries of origin, first asylum and resettlement on whether they would be prepared to let the refugees return to their home country, settle where they find asylum or be resettled in a third country.

9. In the 1950s and early 1960s, UNHCR activities were concentrated mainly on the integration of refugees in developed countries. Since then the focus of activities has shifted towards the developing world, and resettlement in third countries increasingly diminishes in importance compared to repatriation and to a lesser degree local settlement. Today, part of the job of integrating uprooted persons in a developing country, promoting their return or facilitating their reintegration in their places of origin requires the development of hosting areas, a long-term, complex and costly operation that generally falls within the competence of the United Nations development system. UNHCR seeks to play a catalytic role in encouraging the involvement of United Nations development agencies in such operations.

10. Given the absorption capacity of the host countries, in most recent cases developing countries, the international community would need to find a more dynamic and flexible approach in order to ensure adequate funding to assist in the search for durable solutions for refugees. It is essential that the external funding come in addition to the expected official development assistance.

11. In 1988 the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to study the need for an international mechanism to coordinate assistance programmes for the internally displaced. In its resolution 44/136 of 15 December 1989, the General Assembly authorized United Nations resident coordinators - except in the case of special large-scale ad hoc operations - to be the focal point at the country level for the coordination of relief efforts for the internally displaced.

12. UNHCR provides assistance to internally displaced persons on an ad hoc basis at the request of the Secretary-General, the Security Council or the General Assembly through its "good offices" function, in view of the Office's direct relevant expertise and experience. Such activities are usually limited to emergency measures and care and maintenance. Although, in such operations, the High Commissioner has not been formally requested to protect the internally displaced persons in question, she takes their protection needs into account in designing the assistance projects required and reserves a right of intervention with the appropriate authorities where protection-related obstacles impede the provision of assistance requested of her Office. Moreover, in some cases where the emergency has been prolonged, UNHCR's initial assistance has evolved into the search for durable solutions to the problems of this group of uprooted persons.

13. The Commission of Human Rights, in its resolution 1991/25 of 26 February 1991, requested the Secretary-General to submit an analytical report on internally displaced persons, taking into account the protection of their human rights, to it at its forty-eighth session, in 1992.

B. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

14. UNRWA was established by the General Assembly in resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out in collaboration with local Governments direct relief and works programme for Palestine refugees. Both the relief and works programmes were to be implemented without prejudice to the repatriation or compensation provision of resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. b/

15. Unfortunately, the hopes of the international community for the early implementation of these provisions of resolution 194 (III) were not fulfilled and they remain unimplemented today. The General Assembly has therefore periodically extended the mandate of UNRWA, most recently until 30 June 1993.

16. Initially, UNRWA devoted most of its resources to relief services such as providing food, shelter and clothing, with only small proportions being devoted to education and health measures. As the needs of refugees changed and they became increasingly self-supporting, UNRWA adapted its programmes, gradually shifting the emphasis to education, health and relief and social services of the kind usually provided by Governments. Currently, some 2.5 million refugees are registered with UNRWA (the original refugees and their descendants) of whom about one third live in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Some 158,000 pupils attend 631 elementary and junior secondary schools run by UNRWA and there are 5,000 places in eight technical, vocational and teacher training institutes for young refugee men and women. Health services, especially for mothers and babies, are available through a network of about 100 health centres and families meeting criteria of special hardship, a total of some 150,000 persons, receive food and other assistance.

17. The massacre of refugees in Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon in 1982 and the fatalities and injuries sustained by Palestinians in the occupied territories soon after the outbreak of the intifadah in December 1987 focused attention on the need for "protection". In this connection, attention was drawn to the fact that the international legal protection functions accorded to UNHCR under the statute/Convention did not extend to Palestine refugees, since the 1951 statute excluded any refugees already receiving assistance or protection from another international organization. As the Palestine refugees were receiving assistance, though not legal protection, from UNRWA they were beyond the jurisdiction of UNHCR. Palestinians living outside the UNRWA area of operations and therefore not receiving any UNRWA services, were, however, entitled to whatever international legal protection UNHCR could provide. This remains true today.

18. In 1988, UNRWA introduced a programme of general assistance and protection in the occupied territories, following a suggestion by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council of January 1988 (S/19443) in response to its resolution 605 (1987) of 22 December 1987 in which it requested the Secretary-General "to examine the present situation in the occupied territories by all means available to him, and to submit a

report ... containing his recommendations on ways and means for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation".

C. United Nations Children's Fund

19. UNICEF, founded in 1946, was mandated to provide assistance, on the basis of needs, to all child victims of conflicts whose health was imperilled, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious belief or political persuasion. This mandate was later extended to include women. While UNICEF has since focused its activities on development problems, it has always maintained a capacity to respond to emegency needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, addresses the special care and protection needs of all children in difficult circumstances, including those displaced by civil conflicts or to otherwise threatened within their own borders, as well as refugee children. Thus the responsibility of UNICEF to assist children in all situations of difficult circumstances is at the core of its mandate. This is facilitated by the fact that, being a field-based organization, UNICEF's regular programme activities focus largely on sectors that become of primary importance when large numbers of civilians are affected by man-made or natural disasters. UNICEF plays an important role in emergency operations, particularly in the areas of primary health care, including immunization; water supply and sanitation; basic education; and household food security activities. It has recently strengthened its Emergency Operations Unit at headquarters.

D. World Food Programme

20. WFP has been providing emergency assistance since its establishment in 1963. Its original regulations specifically incorporated emergency assistance in the mandate of the Programme. The World Food Conference in 1974 led to the creation a year later of the International Emergency Food Reserve within WFP, in order to provide a multilateral response mechanism for food emergencies. The emergency/development mix of the WFP mandate has evolved over the last 25 years. For example, during the period from 1963 to 1972, only 9.2 per cent of total WFP expenditure represented emergency food assistance. From 1973 to 1988 it increased to 22 per cent. The bulk of emergency food aid assistance from the international community is provided by WFP, between $280 million and $400 million a year. In quantitative terms, this is expected to exceed one million tons in pure emergency food assistance in 1991, in addition to another million tons for refugees and internally displaced persons. It now constitutes almost 50 per cent of WFP operations. In the context of several major ad hoc emergency operations, WFP has served as the coordinator of food assistance for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Somalia and, since 1989, Ethiopia. Today, WFP is recognized as the coordinating body for refugee food assistance in the majority of the large refugee feeding programmes. It is also increasingly acquiring a focal point role in major

emergencies in the mobilization of resources required for logistics support mainly for food, including external and internal transport, storage and handling costs.

E. United Nations Development Programme

21. In the case of complex emergencies, UNDP resident representatives, in their capacity as resident coordinators of the United Nations system, are serving as personal or special coordinators of the Secretary-General for six emergencies in Africa: Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. In natural disasters or other emergencies in which UNDRO coordinates the response of the United Nations system, the UNDP resident representatives have a leading role to play at the country level as UNDRO representatives. They also represent WFP at the country level, though WFP has its own country director and staff.

22. Moreover, UNDP has a responsibility to fund disaster mitigation activities in developing countries in cooperation with UNDRO. In addition, UNDP has a mandate to assess the magnitude of disruption of the development process when an emergency occurs, including in the case of large displacements of populations. It also has a role in addressing the root causes of emergencies, which are often developmental. In some 40 countries, emergencies have disrupted the development process and development assistance has been either curtailed or suspended. Recently, UNDP has established a post of Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Humanitarian Affairs.

23. In June 1991, the UNDP Governing Council approved by its decision 91/7 a one-year workplan for UNDP in relation to emergencies. The Governing Council stressed the multisectoral and multifaceted nature of the economic and social problems involving population displacements; welcomed the joint working arrangements of UNHCR and UNDP and encouraged the Administrator to continue to respond, within the division of labour between the United Nations organizations, in carrying out activities related to providing development assistance to displaced populations. Additionally, it encouraged the Administrator to provide advice and assistance to interested Governments in resource mobilization, in linking emergency and reconstruction activities, and in their integration into the overall development process. It also encouraged the Administrator to assist Governments with natural disaster preparedness and reduction.

F. Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator

24. UNDRO was established by General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster relief and mitigation activities. The functions of the Coordinator can be categorized into two related areas: (a) disaster relief mobilization and coordination, and (b) promotion of disaster mitigation (prevention and preparedness). In this context the Coordinator is authorized on behalf of the Secretary-General:

(a) To establish and maintain the closest cooperation with all organizations concerned and make all feasible advance arrangements with them for the purpose of ensuring the most effective assistance;

(b) To mobilize, direct and coordinate the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State;

(c) To coordinate United Nations assistance with assistance given by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross;

(d) To receive, on behalf of the Secretary-General, contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the United Nations, its agencies and programmes for particular emergency situations;

(e) To assist the Government of the stricken country to assess its relief and other needs and to evaluate the priority of those needs, to disseminate that information to prospective donors and others concerned, and to serve as a clearing-house for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external aid.

25. With regard to disaster mitigation, the responsibilities of the Coordinator are:

(a) To promote the study, prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters, including the collection and dissemination of information concerning technological developments;

(b) To assist in providing advice to Governments on pre-disaster planning in association with relevant voluntary organizations, particularly the League of Red Cross Societies, and to draw upon United Nations resources available for such purposes;

(c) To acquire and disseminate information relevant to planning and coordinating disaster relief, including the improvement and establishment of stockpiles in disaster-prone areas, and to prepare suggestions to ensure the most effective use of available resources;

(d) To phase out relief operations under his aegis as the stricken country moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, but to continue to interest himself, within the framework of his responsibilities for relief, in the activities of the United Nations agencies concerned with rehabilitation and reconstruction.

26. The UNDP resident representative has formally represented UNDRO at the country level since 1973, and on its behalf is responsible for coordinating activities at the country level. The guidelines and procedures governing this representation have evolved over the years, and are most recently described in the UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Manual soon to be issued. The provisions

of the manual, notably with respect to the United Nations disaster management teams established at the country level, are to be reinforced by a jointly run disaster management training programme started in 1990.

G. Specialized agencies

27. Most of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system have a role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in their areas of competence. Thus, the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) stipulates that it should "act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work" and "furnish in emergencies, appropriate necessary aid upon request or acceptance of Governments." It also mandates WHO "to provide or assist in providing, upon the request of the United Nations, health services and facilities to specialized groups". WHO also provides assistance to strengthen the capacity of its member States in developing mitigation and preparedness capacities to become more self-reliant in handling their own emergencies, especially during the first 24-48 hours before international assistance usually arrives. In 1989 it created a new division on emergency relief operations. WHO emergency management offices are also being strengthened at both the regional and community levels. Interregional centres have also been established, such as the WHO Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response at Addis Ababa. A similar institution will be established shortly for Asia and the Pacific. WHO also plays a role in reintegration of returnees, inter alia, through the rehabilitation of health-care systems at sites of final destination.

28. Since 1973, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has established a unit for emergency response to assist affected countries in the assessment and provision of agricultural inputs for rehabilitation and recovery programmes, involving, inter alia, the provision of seeds and fertilizers, livestock vaccination, emergency pest control, flood control and rehabilitation of artisan fisheries, funded by regular and extrabudgetary resources. In addition, FAO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) operate early-warning systems in their areas of specialization. Most of the specialized agencies also play a role in inter-agency needs assessment missions, whenever required, following an emergency.

H. Ad hoc coordination arrangements

29. The General Assembly in its resolution 36/225 of 17 December 1981 decided that whenever required to deal effectively with complex emergencies of exceptional magnitude, the Secretary-General or his representative, who would normally be the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, should convene meetings with concerned organizations of the United Nations system with a view to ensuring a speedy and efficient delivery of goods and services. It further

decided that once it had been determined that an exceptional or complex disaster situation requiring system-wide action existed, then the Secretary-General would designate, at the international level, a lead entity from among the United Nations organizations, including UNDRO, and at the country level the appropriate entity of the United Nations system to carry out relief operations.

30. For complex emergencies the Secretary-General has largely exercised his leadership by designating personal or special representatives or coordinators to mobilize the response of the international community. As a result of such ad hoc arrangements and since 1985 a distinction has been established in practice between three different types of coordination arrangements; coordination for sudden disasters (UNDRO), clear-cut refugee situations (UNHCR) and prolonged and complex emergencies (ad hoc arrangements).

31. The essence of establishing ad hoc arrangements is that they follow in response to a particular emergency situation. This has resulted in the involvement of different individuals and departments to provide technical or administrative backstopping to provide assistance at the country level. At present, emergency operations of a complex nature in Africa are organized by the Special Emergency Unit of the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan is directly monitored from the Office of the Secretary-General, Cambodian humanitarian assistance programmes are coordinated by the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the coordination of United Nations assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon is located in the Office for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services, and the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs is also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in South-East Asia.

32. The Secretary-General, in a report submitted to the General Assembly in 1987 (A/42/657), noted that "one of the important lessons learned from the experience of the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa was the importance of drawing on the authority of the Secretary-General in mobilizing the international community and promoting a coordinated response by the United Nations system, and thus the need of a capacity at United Nations Headquarters to ensure that he is kept fully informed on potential existing disaster situations so as to be in a position to take the appropriate action". The Secretary-General entrusted this responsibility, on a continuing basis, to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation. The initiative of the Secretary-General to establish such a central focal point was endorsed by the General Assembly in its decision 42/433 of 11 December 1987. However, for a variety of reasons, the Director-General has not been involved in any systematic fashion in advising the Secretary-General on coordination arrangements for emergencies.

II. CAPACITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

33. In order to respond effectively to an emergency, capacities for disaster mitigation that include prevention, preparedness and early warning are critical. Such mitigation measures, if systematically promoted in disaster-prone countries and also adequately institutionalized in the assistance activities of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, can help to reduce the worst effects of emergencies in terms of loss of life and damage to property.

34. It is believed that most human suffering and loss of life occur during the initial stages of emergencies and it is critically important that the United Nations system has the necessary stand-by capacity in terms of relief supplies, funds and emergency specialists to respond rapidly. A coherent and rapid response, on the basis of an agreed framework for the division of responsibilities among the organizations of the United Nations system, requires an almost automatic involvement the moment an emergency is declared. This in turn requires that those responsible for emergency response within the United Nations system have not only the mandate but also the capacity to respond.

35. The following information is provided on capacities in the critical areas required for rapid and effective response.

A. Mitigation - prevention and preparedness, including early-warning systems

1. Early warning

36. Early warning is indispensable for prevention and preparedness activities. Early warning prepares the concerned entities of the United Nations system, affected countries, donors and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to take appropriate prevention and mitigation measures. Effective early warning involves several processes: obtaining information; transmission of information; analysis and evaluation of information and management of follow-up, including feedback.

37. Many organizations in the United Nations system already operate early-warning systems in their areas of competence or maintain databases that can provide or have the potential to provide useful information for early warning. These include UNHCR (its experimental Emergency Alert System, which aims at providing data on incipient flows of refugees, and its databases in the area of legal protection), the joint programme of UNICEF, FAO and WHO (Food and Nutritional Surveillance Programme), UNEP (Earthwatch Programme), FAO (Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture), IAEA and WMO (Global Telecommunications System), WMO (World Weather Watch Programme), WHO (Consolidated Information System for Famine Management, Epidemiological Surveillance System, as well as databases for an Emergency Management Information Systems), the World Food Programme (WFP) (International

Food Aid Information System), and UNESCO (it operates an early-warning system to monitor tidal waves), UNDP and UNHCR have announced plans to establish joint activity in maintaining a database on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons. UNDRO operates a computerized system for the immediate dissemination of alert messages to the emergency relief officials in the international community. In addition ICRC and some Governments, for example, the United States of America, with its Office of Disaster Assistance, also operate early-warning systems. The Unit for Special Emergency Programmes of the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship has a role in providing early warning on crisis situations developing in Africa. It has arrangements with UNDRO, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP and so on to provide relevant information to the Unit.

38. In the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction it is planned that capacities to receive and interpret early-warning information from the United Nations system should be strengthened and established in those countries where they do not already exist.

39. One useful source of early-warning information is the network of field offices of many of the concerned United Nations organizations - UNDP, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and FAO - which report to their headquarters on emergencies as they arise or before they happen. Another source for early-warning information is the resident representative of UNDP when serving as the designated official for the United Nations system in security matters. Part of the responsibility of the designated official is to monitor and report on security matters, including information on developments that may lead to displacement of populations and other emergencies. Information received from this monitoring arrangement could usefully be utilized for early warning.

40. Since 1980 the General Assembly has been concerned with the need to avert new flows of refugees through, inter alia, early-warning systems. In 1987, the Office of Research and Collection of Information was established. Its mandates include the provision of early warning of developing situations requiring the Secretary-General's attention to possible refugee flows and comparable emergencies. In 1988, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to develop the role of the Office as the focal point for the operation of an effective internal early-warning system and the strengthening of coordination of information-gathering and analysis among United Nations agencies, with a view to preventing new massive flows of refugees and displaced persons.

41. In 1990, the Joint Inspection Unit advocated the establishment of an effective early-warning system for refugee flows through enhanced system-wide cooperation, with a strengthened Office acting as the focal point (JIU/REP/90/2). JIU is currently conducting an in-depth study on the performance of early-warning systems in the United Nations system for major emerging issues.

2. Disaster mitigation - prevention and preparedness

42. There is general recognition of the need for pre-emergency planning as a prerequisite to efficient relief management. Through a commitment of modest resources in developing prevention and preparedness capacities it is often possible to reduce loss of life and property considerably.

(a) Prevention

43. For man-made emergencies, many of the root causes lie in poverty, environmental degradation, human rights violations, conflicts and the developmental crisis in general. Preventive measures for such emergencies would require concerted efforts to address these problems. The United Nations system is playing an important part in the search for durable solutions to these root causes.

44. In the case of natural disasters, preventative measures are being taken to mitigate the worst effects of disasters. UNDRO is the focal point in the United Nations system for providing advice and assistance to countries in disaster mitigation, in refining disaster mitigation techniques as well as education and training. It has published a Manual on Disaster Mitigation as a policy document for decision makers and planners at the regional, national and local levels. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction aims to reduce the impact of disasters by increasing awareness of the need for establishing disaster mitigation strategies in all vulnerable countries, and at the regional and global levels. To date 92 national committees or focal points have been established. However, in many countries specific measures for disaster mitigation are only in the early stages of identification and have not been fully implemented. Effective implementation would require an emergency response office in each country with trained personnel, communications, equipment, transport and other support. The objective is to ensure that by the year 2000 all countries individually or through regional arrangements should have national and local prevention and preparedness plans, including detailed national risk assessments for various types of natural disasters. National mitigation plans, when fully developed, could provide the framework for coordinated assistance by individual organizations of system at the country level.

45. At present, many development assistance organizations as well as the regional commissions have been providing assistance in disaster mitigation in their areas of competence. However, activities in natural disaster mitigation in developing countries have been limited by lack of funds, though the scientific and technical knowledge exists to reduce significantly the impact of such disasters.

(b) Preparedness

46. The goal of preparedness is to organize for an adequate response to an emergency that is still to come. Preparedness activities involve the preparation of plans for alert and evacuation in the face of imminent danger,

as well as for post-disaster rescue and the provision of food and shelter for the victims. Related aspects of operational planning include establishing the criteria for taking the decisions to implement the various elements of the plan, the training of local officials and education of the population in high-risk areas. Preparedness is based on knowledge. It is a continuous process and an educational activity. Over the years UNDRO, as well as other organizations of the United Nations system, have developed general or area-related preparedness programmes with a large number of disaster-prone countries.

(i) Staff

47. The United Nations organizations responsible for humanitarian assistance activities have taken a number of measures to enhance their preparedness. UNHCR, UNICEF and UNDRO have advance arrangements with various Governments for immediate secondment of specialized emergency staff. UNDRO, and recently WHO, have established such arrangements, for example, with the Swiss disaster relief teams. WHO has also identified focal points for emergency preparedness and response in each country. In some areas WHO has subregional emergency preparedness and response offices. UNHCR is in the process of establishing stand-by teams of emergency officers, which should be in place by the beginning of 1992. It also has arrangements with some non-governmental organizations to rapidly deploy staff for emergency work. UNICEF has established a Rapid Response Emergency Unit at Nairobi, and has worked with a Swedish relief organization (Swed Relief) for the provision of medical and logistical teams, which it has used on several occasions. UNICEF has also established close ties with a number of non-governmental organizations specializing in emergency assistance for the provision of inputs. Most of these United Nations organizations, however, find that when a number of emergencies take place at the same time these arrangements prove to be very inadequate.

48. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and now UNDRO/UNDP conduct training programmes for their staff on emergency management. Some of these programmes are also available to non-governmental organizations and government officials. UNDP and UNDRO have embarked on the disaster management training programme, which is expected to enhance the professional skills of some 3,200 persons, 2,000 of whom are located in disaster-prone developing countries. The programme is being planned and implemented in close collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system with an operational role in disaster management. UNHCR also has an emergency management training programme that includes training in international protection. Since 1985 some 1,000 people have been trained from UNHCR, Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system.

49. Maintaining rosters at headquarters is of critical importance in order rapidly to recruit emergency specialists at very short notice to supplement the field staff at the country level. UNDRO, UNICEF and WFP have maintained rosters of such specialists available from outside the United Nations system. UNICEF and WHO also collaborate in maintaining a roster of staff qualified in

emergency work. Rosters are inadequate, however, if individual organizations do not have special procedures to recruit experts rapidly in emergencies.

50. When an emergency is declared in a country most of the field staff of the United Nations system involved in development assistance are mobilized for emergency work. There are, however, no resources, emergency specialists or equipment immediately available to support their efforts. In addition, until now resident coordinators have not been trained for the task of coordinating the response of the system to emergencies at the country level. They also do not have the possibility of immediate recruitment of staff and procurement of equipment in the absence of special emergency procedures or a central contingency fund.

51. Measures are being taken to establish disaster management teams in some 50 developing countries composed of country representatives of United Nations organizations under the leadership of the resident coordinators. These teams will prepare profiles of the countries, maintain up-to-date listings of technical and other human resources, logistics and relief supplies available on-call in the country, and make arrangements for receiving and interpreting early-warning information.

(ii) Logistics and pre-positioned stockpiles of relief supplies

52. An important element of emergency preparedness is the establishment of pre-positioned stockpiles at strategic points. The United Nations system has two such principal central stockpiles; a larger stockpile for non-food items at the UNICEF Supply Division and Procurement and Assembly Centre (UNIPAC) at Copenhagen and a smaller stockpile of standard relief items at Pisa, Italy, operated by UNDRO. UNDRO also operates a smaller regional warehouse in Mozambique. UNHCR is now in the final stage of negotiations with a donor Government for the establishment and management of an emergency stockpile. This should be operational by the beginning of 1992. Ad hoc local warehouses are also occasionally established for intermediate stockpiles.

53. The Copenhagen stockpile provides the overwhelming amount of non-food emergency relief supplies for the United Nations system, and a significant quantity of emergency supplies for Governments and non-governmental organizations. Other organizations, such as WHO, have arrangements for access to the Copenhagen stockpile, as well as collaborative arrangements with UNDRO for the Pisa warehouse. The emergency inventories should continue to be an integrated part of the regular supply of such items for emergency and development programmes for three reasons. First is their obvious cost reduction and savings on overheads. Second, this ensures continuous turnover that keeps the stockpile fresh. Third, this permits without great excess cost the physical stockpile to be part of a rapid procurement and shipping capacity that can expeditiously purchase supplies centrally as well as in regions of operations.

54. WHO has subcontracted a non-profit organization at Amsterdam to keep medical stocks for its emergency operations. A similar arrangement is being finalized with another warehouse in India. A small drug warehouse will be established under the WHO Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response at Addis Ababa. These WHO stockpiles are based on a standardized list of WHO Emergency Health Kits.

55. The large overall capacity of WHO in channelling food aid to developing countries has enabled it to respond effectively to immediate emergency needs. Although the International Emergency Food Reserve, established at a nominal 300,000 tons of food a year, is not a physical stock of food, the large-scale operations of WFP in development and emergency areas, involving some 3 million tons annually, have constituted a basis for borrowing and diversion of food stuffs from other projects and operations to emergency situations. Thus, even if the Reserve is not a physical reserve, it serves, in case of borrowing, to replace loans. In countries vulnerable to large-scale food emergencies, WFP has designed food reserve projects to allow immediate drawdowns, has set up logistics and food management units, and in certain cases organized and managed trucking fleets to assure adequate capacity to deliver food. In recognition of the protracted food supply problems in long-term refugee relief, WFP has also revised its rules and is now funding such operations from a separate sub-set of its budget, guaranteeing an advance resource coverage. WFP has experimented with physical food stocks as a pre-positioning facility for food emergencies. It has found them impractical and costly to maintain and is advocating instead enhanced arrangements with donor countries giving it access to the latter's own food security stocks within a guaranteed time-frame.

(iii) Funds

56. In the United Nations system most activities are funded on the basis of earmarked contributions, received for specific activities and listed in the individual appeals of each agency or in the consolidated or joint appeals issued on behalf of the Secretary-General in the context of each emergency. A critical time gap exists between pledges and contributions in response to appeals. For this reason, several United Nations organizations have operational reserves or contingency funds of varying magnitude. Recently UNHCR has increased its Emergency Fund from $10 million to $20 million, and it can use up to $6 million for each emergency. UNICEF's contingency fund was increased in 1991 from $4 million to $7 million. In 1990, WHO established an emergency response fund from which it can allocate up to $100,000 per declared emergency for any one country. This amount is replenishable from the donations subsequently received from appeals for each emergency. The UNDP Governing Council recently allocated 15 per cent of the proposed $7 million in the fifth programming cycle (1991-1996) for activities in the relief phase of disasters. WFP's basic reserve is its 500,000-ton International Emergency Food Reserve facility, which it can increase as needs arise. It reached 812,000 tons in 1985. In addition, it can draw from its regular budget $15 million for emergency situations and another $30 million for protracted refugee and displaced persons feeding operations. The Executive Director of WFP can authorize a drawdown of up to $4.5 million in cash advances from the

regular budget against emergency disbursements, and the field staff have a delegation of authority for up to $50,000 expenditure on food and related expenses in each case.

57. UNDRO is allocated regular budget resources of $360,000 for emergency grants and can allocate up to a maximum of $50,000 per disaster for any one country. The Secretary-General is not provided with a separate allocation for the coordination of immediate response to complex emergencies.

58. These separate funds facilitate a rapid response and allow operational organizations, in the context of ad hoc operations, to get involved in the initial relief activities before the coordination arrangements are established and become operational. However, the aggregate amount of these resources are totally inadequate for rapid responses to large-scale emergencies.

(iv) Central inventory and information exchange

59. At present, there is no central registry or inventory of the stand-by capacities of emergency specialists, relief supplies, funds and logistic support available within the United Nations system or from bilateral or non-governmental organization sources. UNDRO recently developed a registry of search and rescue teams available from outside the United Nations system. A fundamental step in emergency preparedness is regularly to share information on preparedness plans with all parties in the international community - disaster-prone countries, bilateral Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and within the United Nations system. This will ensure that overall information is readily available on capacities available in the international community and on what to expect when a rapid response is required. This kind of information can form the basis for comprehensive contingency plans.

B. Needs assessment and appeals

60. Most funding for each emergency is obtained through appeals. An accurate assessment of the needs is a fundamental requirement for ensuring an adequate response to an emergency. In emergencies where a particular organization has a clear-cut sectoral responsibility, it issues its own appeal. Where more than one organization is involved, donors have expressed their preference for information, collected on the basis of joint inter-agency missions, to be presented in a consolidated fashion.

61. In the case of sudden natural disasters UNDRO is responsible for coordinating an immediate needs assessment based largely on information provided by the resident coordinator, who is also the UNDRO representative. This is followed, if required, by an inter-agency joint needs assessment mission. On the basis of this, a consolidated appeal is normally issued on behalf of the Secretary-General. WHO has developed in 1990 a set of rapid assessment protocols to be utilized to assess the health effects of disasters. These have been distributed widely for field tests.

62. In instances of ad hoc arrangements for complex emergencies, each personal representative of the Secretary-General issues a consolidated appeal on his behalf on the basis of an inter-agency needs assessment. The Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship issues consolidated appeals on behalf of the Secretary-General for complex and prolonged emergencies in Africa.

63. There has been a tendency for some organizations to issue their own pre-appeals, separate appeals and special appeals in addition to the consolidated appeal of the Secretary-General. This has resulted in complaints by donors that it is difficult for them to determine the relationship of individual appeals to the consolidated appeal. They also cannot identify overlaps between the multiplicity of such appeals and whether subsequent appeals cancel earlier ones. This affects both the timeliness and the effectiveness of their response.

64. Lack of specificity in appeals has also in many cases hampered the effectiveness of the response of donors and relief agencies. It has been pointed out that standard descriptions should be used for relief items and clear specifications should be provided for non-standard items. Transport costs should form an integral part of the appeal. Data on relief needs received from a wide range of sources should be evaluated and reconciled before being transmitted to potential donors. Changing requirements must be recorded and transmitted on a continuing basis.

65. Status or situation reports prepared by UNDRO and ad hoc operations are intended to keep all partners informed of developments in between more formal appeals, which they supplement. UNDRO has recently improved the quality of its situation reports. They now indicate the quantities of cash or relief items still required from outside the relief area after deduction of quantities already provided or reliably pledged.

C. Dissemination of information on emergencies

66. One of UNDRO's mandates is to serve as a clearing-house of information for all sources of external assistance in emergencies. Its information dissemination, except in a few cases, is limited only to those emergencies for which it has a coordinating role. Each ad hoc operation disseminates its own information. Some have used the information dissemination capacity of UNDRO. WHO, for example, has used UNDRO for the dissemination of appeals and situation reports on the cholera epidemic. The Executive Delegate of the Secretary-General has used UNDRO's facilities for the Persian Gulf operation, and UNDRO has also disseminated information for the ad hoc operation in Liberia.

67. UNDRO maintains the United Nations International Emergency Network (UNIENET) and its communication and information database facilities. The database of UNIENET should be developed into a fully interactive one to keep track of emergency needs, pledges, actual contributions, outstanding balances

and logistics data. In addition to UNIENET, UNDRO transmits situation reports to up to 500 potential donors (Governments, international and non-governmental organizations). UNDRO has been taking measures to upgrade its information systems, but its ability to do so has been limited by lack of resources.

68. UNDRO's technical capacity in information dissemination needs to be reviewed continuously in order to ensure that in acquiring new capacity, it will be able to play this critical role as a clearing-house and manager of fast, reliable information on the basis of improved collection, analysis and dissemination capacity for all types of emergencies. WFP also issues a weekly emergency operations telex, which covers the major food emergencies providing specific information on food shipments and bottlenecks. Through this method, it attempts to avoid duplication and misrepresentation of data by non-experts.

D. Access to emergency areas

69. Access to emergency areas is an indispensable condition for relief and humanitarian work, including for the transport and distribution of relief goods. In 1989, WFC recommended the development of guidelines to ensure the safe passage of emergency food aid. The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/100 of 14 December 1990 on humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, requested the Secretary-General to pursue the necessary consultations with a view to determining means of facilitating the delivery of appropriate humanitarian assistance to the victims of emergencies, including the establishment of corridors, and to submit a report to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

70. Access to needy individuals often requires - in cases of conflict - the negotiation of "ground rules" with respect to timing and modality of access (e.g. notification arrangements, cease-fire agreements, corridors of tranquillity, etc.). This requires continuous discussions with all parties to the conflict concerning cross-border or cross-line assessment of needs, delivery of assistance and sometimes international monitoring. In several of the more successful operations, the designated coordinator has played a significant role in the orchestration of both political and relief and rehabilitation activities. In recent years the innovations introduced by the United Nations system in such concepts as days, corridors and zones of tranquillity have assisted in creating special circumstances during which emergency assistance could be provided to victims on all sides of a conflict. These innovations need to be refined further and the capacity of the United Nations in this area should be strengthened by building upon this experience.

E. Operating procedures

71. Each United Nations organization has its own rules and procedures. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, ICRC and a number of non-governmental organizations have issued handbooks or manuals for emergencies for use by their staff. UNDRO and UNDP are preparing a comprehensive joint manual for disaster management at the

country level, which will be issued before the end of the year. In addition, the United Nations Coordinator for Security Matters is finalizing a common security handbook that has implications for actions taken under emergency conditions.

72. Regulations and procedures governing the purchase of supplies and in the hiring of staff have a direct bearing on the rapid delivery of relief assistance. Since normal procurement procedures do not lend themselves to emergency action, there is a need to adapt existing procedures concerning the procurement, transport and storage of emergency supplies in order to expedite emergency relief. For example, some agencies within and outside the United Nations system do not require formal tendering processes in order to maintain fast response time to emergencies.

73. In order to implement a joint plan of action for major emergencies it is important that all organizations involved should have flexible procedures. This is necessary to ensure that such a plan is implemented in a rapid and coordinated manner.

74. In order to ensure a rapid response from the United Nations system, national Governments should also develop special emergency procedures that allow the United Nations system to bypass usual customs clearance and other rules that prevent rapid procurement of equipment and relief supplies.

F. Logistics

75. Effective mobilization of logistics and transport plays a critical role in relief assistance. Most United Nations agencies manage the logistics directly related to their main operational responsibilities although some do utilize the services of more specialized organizations for large-scale operations. WFP, as the United Nations agency with the largest and most significant involvement in shipping, transport and logistics, plays the main focal point role in the coordination of transport of all food shipments, especially in complex emergency operations. It also regularly provides transport and logistic services for bilateral consignments. WFP also has projects to improve bottlenecks in the logistic chain, for example, assessment of port capacity and equipment. In Ethiopia it operates 340 long-haul trucks, in Pakistan it maintains a joint logistics cell with UNHCR to serve Afghanistan, and in the Sudan it employs 100 logistics coordinators and monitors. WFP handles not only food but considerable quantities of non-food items ranging from port equipment and vehicles to shelter and other camp equipment. UNHCR and WFP are proposing that as from 1992 WFP will gradually take over the responsibility for logistics involved in the transport of food supplies to all UNHCR/WFP refugee feeding operations. UNICEF also transports emergency relief supplies, mainly in the non-food sector.

76. IOM is increasingly taking on focal point responsibility for the transport of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the context of United Nations coordinated efforts. In the recent crisis in Jordan, IOM

participated in a coordinated effort with the United Nations system and operated up to 40 flights a day to transport about 200,000 third-country nationals. IOM has also participated in a coordinated effort of the United Nations system to transport over 200,000 refugees from Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran back to Iraq. In the two most recent cases, the scale and suddenness of the emergencies also required the additional logistic support of the coalition forces in the Gulf and the United States Armed Forces in Bangladesh.

G. International Committee of the Red Cross and International Organization for Migration

77. In many emergencies, the United Nations has worked closely with two organizations, ICRC and IOM.

1. International Committee of the Red Cross

78. ICRC, whose activities are based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their supplementary 1977 Protocols, known together as international humanitarian law, upholds that persons displaced as a result of armed conflict or unrest are entitled to protection and assistance. As a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in times of international and other armed conflicts or internal strife, ICRC is expected to ensure the protection of and assistance to military and civilian victims of such events and of their direct results. At the heart of ICRC's ability to take independent and effective action are the provisions in its statutes that provide for the "right of initiative".

79. Persons internally displaced by armed conflict are protected by, inter alia, the fundamental guarantees concerning the treatment of persons taking no active part in the hostilities. Furthermore, Protocol II reiterates that, in cases not covered by the law in force, the victims remain at all times under the protection of the "principles of humanity and the dictates of the public conscience". Moreover, as with international armed conflict, ICRC may use the right of initiative to act on behalf of internally displaced persons who are victims of non-international armed conflicts. This affirms the role of ICRC as the residual institution in situations involving armed conflict where no other body is available, willing or competent to provide protection and assistance.

80. Nevertheless, ICRC has had some difficulties in the provision of protection and assistance to internally displaced persons who are victims of armed conflicts or violence. Therefore, resolution XVII, entitled "The Movement and Refugees", was passed at the 1986 International Conference of the Red Cross at Geneva, reinforcing previous statements of policy, and asking Governments to permit ICRC to provide assistance and protection to those persons having none, as in the case of internally displaced persons. Also at the Geneva conference, it was made clear that Red Cross programmes are of an

"emergency character" and "should be phased out as soon as the other organizations are in a position to provide the aid required".

2. International Organization for Migration

81. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was founded at the Migration Conference of 5 December 1951. Originally, its mandate was temporary and regional in nature, but the demand for migration assistance grew instead of subsiding, and in 1979 the Organization's mandate was expanded, de facto, to provide assistance worldwide. The objective of IOM is to ensure orderly migration of persons who are in need of international migration services. At present, the organization has some 40 member and 25 observer States and maintains over 50 field offices in all regions, including offices in countries that are not members or observers.

H. Non-governmental organizations and the media

82. The role of the non-governmental organizations in emergencies has grown significantly. They are well placed to reach sources of funding. The expenditure on total field programmes of non-governmental organizations in 1986 amounted to approximately $3 billion. The financial resources of the six largest non-governmental organizations involved in development and emergency work now amount to $1.2 billion. Other than the financial weight of these organizations, in recent years their capacity to raise public concern, leading to wide support for large relief operations, has been a major factor in determining the scale of international assistance in emergencies. In addition they can provide large numbers of technical staff willing to work in emergency conditions and their assistance of the uprooted often carries with it a de facto protection role. For all these reasons the United Nations system's capacity to mobilize and utilize them effectively can have a considerable bearing on the success of a relief operation. There is a growing recognition that the United Nations should provide the necessary framework and leadership to the non-governmental organizations in emergency responses.

83. UNHCR and UNDRO have developed a systematic consultative mechanism to keep non-governmental organizations informed and to coordinate their activities in the context of each emergency. UNDRO, as the lead agency in Jordan following the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, worked closely with some non-governmental organizations that were designated to manage individual refugee camps. In the Sudan, non-governmental organizations were involved in 80 per cent of the relief work following the 1984-1985 famine. Most recently, in the provision of assistance to the Kurdish refugees, UNHCR, as the lead agency, deployed a staff of 180 from the Nordic refugee councils to supplement its efforts at the country level.

84. However, in the context of ad hoc operations for complex emergencies, because responsibilities are spread across so many departments, it has been difficult to develop a capacity to maintain a regular liaison with

non-governmental organizations. As a result, the potential to take full advantage of their role has sometimes not been utilized.

85. The media plays a central role in mobilizing resources from potential donors in response to emergencies. No other means or institution is capable of mobilizing public concern, as well as resources, as intensely and as quickly as the media. This has been illustrated in all the major emergencies, ranging from the 1984 Ethiopian famine to the Kurdish refugee situation. At present the media and others interested have to approach several different United Nations departments and agencies to obtain up-to-date information on each of the major ad hoc operations for complex emergencies. The media has difficulty obtaining information immediately, since, in the absence of a central focal point, it is usually difficult to identify the office or department responsible for each individual emergency operation. UNDRO and UNHCR have central focal points for information on sudden natural disasters and refugee situations respectively and also widely disseminate relevant information to the media.

Notes

a/ See the statute of UNHCR (annex to General Assembly resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950), paras. 1 and 9.

b/ In paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), the General Assembly agreed upon a "durable solution" to the problem by resolving that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss or damage to property".

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ISRAELI NUCLEAR ARMAMENT

Report of the Secretary-General

1. On 4 December 1990, the General Assembly adopted resolution 45/63, the operative part of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Reiterates its condemnation of Israel's refusal to renounce any possession of nuclear weapons;

"2. Reiterates also its condemnation of the cooperation between Israel and South Africa in the military field;

"3. Expresses its deep concern regarding the information on Israel's continuing production, development and acquisition of nuclear weapons and testing of their delivery systems;

"4. Reaffirms that Israel should promptly apply Security Council resolution 487 (1981), in which the Council, inter alia, requested it to place all nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and to refrain from attacking or threatening to attack nuclear facilities;

"5. Calls upon all States and organizations that have not yet done so not to cooperate with or give assistance to Israel that could enhance its nuclear-weapons capability;

"6. Requests the International Atomic Energy Agency to inform the Secretary-General of any steps Israel may take to place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards;

"7. Requests the Secretary-General to follow closely Israeli nuclear activities and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

"8. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-sixth session the item entitled 'Israeli nuclear armament'."

2. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Secretary-General has continued to follow closely Israeli nuclear activities. However, apart from the material received from the International Atomic Energy Agency (see annex), no additional information has been forwarded to the Secretary-General since the submission of the last report to the General Assembly on the subject (A/45/574).

ANNEX

Resolution GC(XXXV)/RES/570 of 20 September 1991 of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat

The General Conference,

(a) Recognizing the urgent need to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and a nuclear arms race in the area of the Middle East,

(b) Gravely concerned about Israel's nuclear capability and threat to peace and security in the area,

(c) Recalling General Conference resolution GC(XXXIV)/RES/526 concerning Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat,

(d) Recalling Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which, inter alia, requested Israel to submit all its nuclear installations to the Agency's safeguards system and to refrain from attacking or threatening to attack nuclear installations,

(e) Alarmed at the continuous refusal by Israel to place all its nuclear installations under the Agency's safeguards, and

(f) Noting the Director General's report contained in document GC(XXXV)/960,

1. Calls once again upon Israel to comply without delay with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) by submitting all its nuclear installations to Agency safeguards;

2. Urges all the States supplying nuclear materials or equipment to Israel to apply full-scope safeguards to their exports;

3. Requests the Director General to consult with Israeli authorities on the implementation of this resolution and to report to the next session of the General Conference;

4. Further requests the Director General to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of this resolution; and

5. Decides to include in the agenda for its thirty-sixth regular session an item entitled "Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat".

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NATIONS

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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Further strengthening and improving intergovernmental programming exercises for technical cooperation among developing countries

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its decision 44/450 of 22 December 1989, the General Assembly stressed the importance of decision 6/5 adopted by the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries which, inter alia, had requested Governments and organizations of the United Nations development system to continue offering their firm support to intergovernmental programming exercises for technical cooperation among developing countries, and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the decision to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

2. In keeping with the precedent set at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly in a similar situation, the Secretary-General and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme have coordinated the preparation of a single report entitled "Strengthening and improving intergovernmental programming exercises for technical cooperation among developing countries". The report covers the information requested both by the General Assembly, and the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, in their respective decisions. The report, which was issued in document TCDC/7/4, was reviewed by the High-level Committee at its seventh session and the reactions and decision of the Committee are contained in its report, which is before the General Assembly at its present session in document A/46/39.

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Agenda item 145

THE SITUATION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI

Letter dated 11 October 1991 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I have the honour to transmit to you the text of a statement of the Chairman of CARICOM on the situation in Haiti, issued at Basseterre on 2 October 1991.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 145.

(Signed) Raymond C. TAYLOR
Chargé d'affaires

Annex

Statement on the situation in Haiti made on 2 October 1991 at Basseterre by the Chairman of the Caribbean Community

The Caribbean Community is deeply shocked by the action of elements of the armed forces of Haiti in illegally seizing President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and members of his administration and usurping the authority of the duly constituted Government freely chosen by the Haitian people to manage their affairs.

This outrageous action by the Haitian military is an unacceptable expression of cynical contempt for the declared will of the people of Haiti, which was overwhelmingly and unambiguously manifested in the elections of December 1990. The Caribbean Community condemns unreservedly this flagrant assault on the unfolding democratic process in Haiti, and demands the restoration of constitutional order and of Father Aristide to the Presidency of the Republic.

CARICOM believes that this latest act of repression by the Haitian military proves the correctness of its call in the past for concerned international assistance to consolidate democratic gains in Haiti, and once more calls upon the international community to take all appropriate measures to restore democracy and the constitutionally elected Government of Haiti.

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NATIONS

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Agenda item 58

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE DENUCLEARIZATION OF AFRICA

Nuclear capability of South Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

1. On 4 December 1990, the General Assembly adopted resolution 45/56 B, the operative part of which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on South Africa's nuclear capability;

"2. Condemns the massive build-up of South Africa's military machine, in particular its frenzied acquisition of nuclear-weapon capability for repressive and aggressive purposes and as an instrument of blackmail;

"3. Also condemns all forms of nuclear collaboration by any State, corporation, institution or individual with the racist regime of South Africa, in particular the decision by some Member States to grant licences to several corporations in their territories to provide equipment and technical and maintenance services for nuclear installations in South Africa;

"4. Takes note with great concern of recent reports that collaboration between Israel and South Africa has resulted in the development by South Africa of a nuclear-tipped missile;

"5. Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on South Africa's nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capability, submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of its resolution 44/113 B;

"6. Requests all Member States to submit to the Secretary-General their views and suggestions with respect to the above-mentioned report, and further requests the Secretary-General to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

"7. Reaffirms that the acquisition of nuclear-weapon capability by the racist regime constitutes a very grave danger to international peace and security and, in particular, jeopardizes the security of African States and increases the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons;

"8. Expresses its full support for the African States faced with the danger of South Africa's nuclear capability;

"9. Commends the actions taken by those Governments which have taken measures to restrict cooperation with South Africa in nuclear and other fields;

"10. Calls upon all States, corporations, institutions and individuals to terminate forthwith all forms of military and nuclear collaboration with the racist regime;

"11. Requests the Secretary-General to provide all necessary assistance that the Organization of African Unity may seek regarding the modalities and elements for the preparation and implementation of the relevant convention or treaty on the denuclearization of Africa;

"12. Commends the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 558 (1984) of 13 December 1984 and 591 (1986) of 28 November 1986 on the question of South Africa, with a view to blocking the existing loopholes in the arms embargo so as to render it more effective and to prohibiting, in particular, all forms of cooperation and collaboration with the racist regime of South Africa in the nuclear field;

"13. Demands once again that South Africa submit forthwith all its nuclear installations and facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency;

"14. Also requests the Secretary-General to follow very closely South Africa's evolution in the nuclear field and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

"15. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session on the military assistance that apartheid South Africa is receiving from Israel and any other sources in advanced missile technology as well as the supporting technical facilities."

2. Pursuant to paragraph 14 of the resolution, the Secretary-General has continued to follow very closely South Africa's evolution in the nuclear field. In this connection, the Secretary-General has, inter alia, been in contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). He has also, on the same subject, received a letter dated 11 July 1991 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations.

3. In his letter to the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of South Africa has informed the Secretary-General that, on 10 July 1991, the Government of South Africa deposited its Instrument of Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in Washington, D.C. The Permanent Representative's letter, at his request, has been circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 58 (see A/46/302).

4. In response to the inquiry of the Secretary-General, the Director-General of IAEA has informed him that, at its thirty-fifth regular session, the General Conference of the Agency adopted a resolution, on 20 September 1991, concerning South Africa's nuclear capabilities (GC(XXXV)/RES/567), which is submitted herewith (see annex).

5. Should the Secretary-General receive any further information on the subject, he will bring it to the attention of the General Assembly without delay.

ANNEX

Resolution GC(XXXV)/RES/567 on South Africa's nuclear capabilities, adopted by the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency at its 341st plenary meeting, on 20 September 1991

The General Conference,

(a) Recalling its resolution GC(XXXIV)/RES/545 on South Africa's nuclear capabilities,

(b) Taking note of document GC(XXXV)/966 indicating accession by South Africa to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 10 July 1991,

(c) Further taking note of the fact that the South African Government has negotiated and signed a safeguards agreement with the Agency and committed itself to early and full implementation of the agreement in its statement in the September 1991 session of the Board of Governors, and

(d) Stressing that the full disclosure of South Africa's nuclear installations and materials is essential to the peace and security of the region,

1. Requests the Director General to ensure early implementation of the safeguards agreement; and

2. Requests the Director General to verify the completeness of the inventory of South Africa's nuclear installations and material and to report to the Board of Governors and to the General Conference at its thirty-sixth regular session.

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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 14 October 1991 from the Permament Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text, in English and French, of the statement of the European Community and its member States on the Middle East peace process issued on 10 October 1991 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 35.

(Signed) Robert J. van SCHAIK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Statement on the Middle East peace process issued by the European Community and its member States on 10 October 1991

The Community and its member States reaffirm their full support for the Middle East peace initiative promoted by the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They welcome the agreement in principle of all the parties to the dispute to the approach proposed by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Baker. In this respect they also welcome the positive attitude of the Palestine National Council. They hope that this emerging consensus will open the way to an early resolution of the problem of an authentic Palestinian representation. They do not believe that any formula on this issue can be held to prejudice negotiations on substantive issues such as the status of Jerusalem.

The Community and its member States continue to attach importance to the adoption by both sides of confidence-building measures designed to create the right climate for successful negotiations. They underline the importance they attach to a suspension of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and welcome the willingness of Arab States to freeze the trade boycott of Israel in return for this.

They reaffirm their strong disapproval of the "Zionism is Racism" resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly, which they believe should be consigned to oblivion.

While reaffirming their well-known positions of principle, the Community and its member States confirm their determination to give all possible support to efforts to convene a Middle East peace conference and their determination to play an active role as a full participant in such a conference alongside the co-sponsors.

They believe that an unprecedented opportunity to create peace between Israel and the Arabs now exists and they call upon all parties to show the flexibility and imagination necessary to grasp this.

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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Letter dated 7 October 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to the letter dated 13 August 1991 which Professor de Marco, President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, wrote to you with regard to the question of Albanian boat-people (see annex I). Professor de Marco is deeply appreciative of the prompt response which has been given to his letter, as well as of the very supportive letter he received on 4 September 1991 from Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in this connection (see annex II).

In the light of the relevance of both these letters to the question of humanitarian emergency assistance by the United Nations I kindly request you to circulate the text of both letters as documents of the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 143.

(Signed) Victor CAMILLERI
Permanent Representative

ANNEX I

Letter dated 13 August 1991 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta and President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General

The Mediterranean is witnessing the presence of Albanian boat-people who are trying to leave their country, refugees from massive unemployment and want.

These boat-people are running into thousands, and they are being refused entrance into neighbouring countries.

I am informed that they cannot be considered as "refugees" by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the only help that can be given to them seems to be limited to humanitarian aspects.

Both you and I have visited Albania and encouraged the newly formed Government in the search for democracy and observance of human rights.

Events there and elsewhere may entail that the democratic process will lose its meaning and not survive a collapse of the economy, massive unemployment and resulting hunger.

These last few days I witnessed in Malta the heart-wrenching scene of some 700 of these "refugees", amongst them several young children aged between 6 and 16 years, suffering from the distress of the ordeal their country is passing through.

They were eventually repatriated to Albania at Malta's expense, after receiving humanitarian and medical assistance, and after assurances were received from the Albanian authorities that the refugees would not be penalized for their actions.

In this context, I would suggest that the necessary initiatives be taken in the United Nations so that the concept of "refugee" be extended to cover also these "hunger refugees" and that measures be considered to encourage further economic assistance, both through bilateral as well as multilateral sources, in these unfortunate circumstances.

May I therefore solicit your good offices with the United Nations agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as with potential donor countries, so as to mount a concerted effort to provide openings so as to create in Albania's youth a resurgence of faith in their own country, and in their contribution to its development.

Rest assured that I am prepared to assist in this endeavour to the fullest extent of my ability both in my capacity as President of the General Assembly and as Malta's Foreign Minister.

(Signed) Guido de MARCO

ANNEX II

Letter dated 4 September 1991 from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly

The Secretary-General has shared with me your letter of 13 August 1991 on the question of the Albanian "boat-people" and has requested that I reply on his behalf.

My colleagues and I have followed with particular attention developments in Albania that have led tens of thousands of its citizens to leave their country, in chaotic and often tragic circumstances. At the outset, I wish to thank your Government, and you personally, for the effective and humane manner in which it dealt with the arrival of nearly 700 Albanians on two ships, last 7 August. As you know, I immediately requested my Representative in Rome - who is also accredited to Malta - to proceed speedily to La Valletta and to extend every possible assistance to the Maltese authorities.

You are absolutely correct in underlining the essential link between democracy, observance of fundamental freedoms and economic and social development. With its economy virtually paralysed and its population - especially its youth - in a state of despair, the democratization process in Albania is not only at risk, but so is the stability of the surrounding region as well.

Following the most recent outflow, the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration and myself decided to despatch a joint, high-level mission to Tirana to discuss further ways and means of assisting the National Stabilization Government to overcome the formidable challenges posed in this transition phase of Albania's history. My colleagues have confirmed that, while significant progress has been achieved in terms of establishing a multi-party parliamentarian democracy respectful of human rights the disarray of its economy is bound to cause the recurrence of mass, irregu ar outflows, unless international action is forthcoming. I have shared my preoccupation with the Secretary-General and very much hope that he will find it possible to call the attention of Governments, particularly the G-24, as well as the intergovernmental institutions, to the urgent need to address Albania's immediate humanitarian requirements and longer-term economic and financial needs. The earliest opportunity to pursue this goal appears to be the Round-Table on Albania that the United Nations Development Programme and the Commission of the European Communities are convening jointly in Brussels on 17 and 18 September 1991. I am aware that your Personal Assistant, Mr. Michael Bartolo, has conveyed to my Director of External Relations, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, your willingness to be of assistance in this matter, for which I am most grateful.

Could I suggest, therefore, that you use your moral and political authority, both bilaterally and in your capacity as President of the General

Assembly, to insist on the need for early, concerted and tangible demonstrations of solidarity that would provide the Albanian Government with vital help in reviving the presently morbund commitment of its people to far-reaching structural reforms.

As regards your suggestion that the refugee definition be extended to cover "hunger refugees", this is a particularly complex and sensitive question at this juncture. The experience of my predecessors and my own would suggest prudence on the question of legal definitions, as it could put in jeopardy the internationally accepted norms of refugee law.

May I, in conclusion, express once again my gratitude for your unfailing personal support to a broadening of the conceptual framework within which humanitarian problems must henceforth be addressed.

(Signed) Sadako OGATA